WASHTENAW COUNTY HISTORICAL SOCIETY—Founded December 19, 1857 JANUARY 1977

WASHTENAW IMPRESSIONS

PRESIDENT'S CORNER

We have two newly elected directors to the board of the Washtenaw County Historical Society. They are Dr. William Bender and Douglas Crary. We are very pleased to have these two experienced and capable men join the board.

We announce with regret the resignations from the board of Irene Lawliss and Louise Fraumann. Irene has moved to Traverse City. We appreciate the many hours they have devoted to the board and to the society.

Christmas at the Kempf House was delightful. Our hosts, Mr. and Mrs. Paul Kempf were most gracious. Ruth Pickl decorated the first floor in the early period of the Kempf House and it was very warm and nostalgic. Irene Lawliss and Dorothy Ouradnik, party co-chairpersons, are to be commended on the arrangements . . . the table decorations, the eggnog, the cookies, etc. On their behalf I would like to thank all of the many people who brought Christmas Cookies (a wide variety and delicious). Over one hundred attended, making it a very successful fun party.

Thomas F. Lacy

SPECIAL MEETING POSTPONED

A special meeting to consider Barton Power House as a museum site is expected to be announced later.

Work on the proposed agreement between the city and WCHS was delayed by the holidays, Hazel Proctor, museum committee chairman, explained, and the matter did not yet get on the City Council agenda as is necessary.

LOCAL ENGINEER WHO 'COLLECTS' COVERED BRIDGES TO PRESENT SLIDES AT JANUARY 27 WCHS MEETING

The one or two horsepower drivers of an earlier day didn't have to worry about the possibly icy bridge decks of today's freeways. They had covered bridges.

Covered bridges will be the topic of the next WCHS meeting at 8 p.m. Thursday, January 27, in Liberty Hall at Ann Arbor Federal Savings and Loan, Liberty and Division Streets, Ann Arbor.

The speaker will be Clare Hoedeman, an engineer who spends most of his time planning modern highways but who became interested in covered bridges when he helped repair some of Michigan's few remaining ones some years ago.

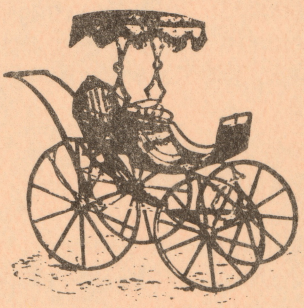
He will show slides of covered bridges in Michigan and elsewhere as well as other covered bridge mementos. His collection includes bridges in Parke County, Indiana, New York, Vermont, New Hampshire and the Gaspe Peninsula of Quebec.

ANTIQUE GLASS SLIDES USED IN LOCAL LUTHERAN SCHOOL, PROJECTOR, BABY CRIB, DOLL BUGGY GIVEN TO WCHS

A collection of early 20th century glass slides used to teach history in a Lutheran school here and an antique slide projector to show them has been donated to WCHS by Robert Schapler of Ann Arbor.

Other recent gifts are an antique baby crib and doll buggy given by the director of Lurie Terrace, Stuart Thayer, curator, reports.

There are 200-300 slides all in their own cabinet, Thayer said. Schapler rescued them from being discarded. After he told his sister, Mrs. Betty Gibbons of Detroit about it, she found the projector with a long bellows arrangement for focusing. The slides include pictures of Germany and early American scenes.



U-M BOOK CONSERVATOR WILL SPEAK AT MEETING

James W. Craven, book conservator of University libraries, will speak at the Genealogy Section meeting Sunday, January 23, on "How to Preserve Materials."

The meeting will be at the home of Professor and Mrs. Leigh Anderson, 1120 Lincoln Avenue. Personal help and the opportunity to browse through the Section's collection of references is offered from 1 to 2:30 p.m. when the business meeting and program begin. A coffee hour follows.

The group plans a program on "The Study of Genealogy" in February and March.

'600 YEARS IN 60 MINUTES' WILL BE FEBRUARY TOPIC

Ralph Muncy, founder of the Genealogy Section, will give a slide illustrated talk at the Washtenaw County Historical Society meeting at 8 p.m. Thursday, February 27, at Liberty Hall.

His topic is "Traveling Tangled Trails, 600 Years in 60 Minutes."

KEMPF HOUSE

ANN ARBOR'S LITTLE GREEK 'TEMPLE'

WCHS members sipped eggnog and sampled homemade Christmas cookies around Ann Arbor's first concert grand piano and a cranberry and popcorn garlanded Christmas tree at Kempf House in December.

The Greek Revival style house at 312 South Division Street is now a city-owned museum. About half the furnishings are on loan from the county historical society.

It was the longtime residence of Reuben and Pauline Kempf, accomplished musicians and teachers who helped develop Ann Arbor's musical reputation. Victor Herbert and the Kaiser's grandson were house guests there.

Many Ann Arborites got their musical education around the Kempf's piano which The University of Michigan borrowed for concerts because it was the only concert grand in town. Paderewski once played it and Madame Schumann-Heink sang to its accompaniment.

The house was built before 1853 for Henry DeWitt Bennett, according to Wystan Stevens, curator. Active in local affairs, Bennett was city postmaster and involved in business before he was appointed secretary and steward of the University in 1869. He resigned that position in 1883 and moved to California in 1886. Kempf bought it in 1890.

The house, a little Greek "temple," was in the style that became popular in a society whose students studied the classics and the modern Greek war for independence had been in the news.

The furnishings include a desk owned by Michigan's first governor, Judge Dexter's Boston rocker and Ann Allen's fan. Judge Samuel W. Dexter founded the nearby village of Dexter. Ann Allen was one of the two "Anns" for whom Ann Arbor was named.

The escritoire owned by Stevens T. Mason, who assumed office as Michigan's first governor at age 19, later came into the possession of the Bach family of Ann Arbor.

Courtesy of Michigan Historical Collections, Bentley Library, U-M

KEMPF HOUSE IN 'ATHENS OF THE WEST'

Mr. and Mrs. Paul R. Kempf acted as host and hostess for the open house at his boyhood home. His father, Reuben Kempf, was born in 1859 to a pioneer German family on Waters Road near the present Briarwood Shopping Center.

At 17, young Reuben was sent to Basel, Switzerland, to study for the Lutheran ministry. He found he had a greater interest in music and transferred to the Royal Conservatory in Stuttgart. The few English-speaking students there included Victor Herbert and others with whom he developed lifelong friendships, Lela Duff relates in *Ann Arbor Yesterdays.*

After graduation in 1879 he returned to Ann Arbor and began a long musical career.

He organized and directed concert series here several years before the May Festival started in 1894. At the suggestion of U-M President Angell, he organized the Lyra Male Chorus and Lyra *Gesangverein* (Singing Society) to foster better understanding between town and gown through music. A banner of the Lyra *Gesangverein* hangs just inside the front door of Kempf House.

He was also active in the University Glee Club and served for 33 years (1895-1928) as organist and choir director of St. Andrew's Episcopal Church.

His wife, the former Pauline Widenmann of Ann Arbor, graduated from the Cincinnati Conservatory of Music and studied under a celebrated voice coach, Oscar Saenger, in New York. An accomplished contralto, Mrs. Kempf taught hundreds of local children and U-M students and conducted the Congregational Church choir.

"Mrs. Kempf's pupils were taught to sing while facing the large mirrors which hung on two walls (of the studio to the right of the front door) to remind them that proper posture is an essential foundation of sweet song," Stevens

writes in the Ann Arbor Historic District Commission leaflet available to Kempf House visitors.

A favorite Kempf family story is that Madame Schumann-Heink came personally to inspect the Steinway piano to be borrowed for her concert at the University. She pronounced the instrument's musical quality "excellent" and noting Mrs. Kempf's mirrors asked to have one in her dressing room here. Her request was granted.

Mrs. Kempf's cousin, Dr. Adolph Widenmann, was physician to Germany's last Crown Prince, Louis Ferdinand von Preussen, son of the Kaiser, for a number of years. That is how it happened the Prince's son happened to stay at Kempf House while on a visit to America.

Reuben Kempf continued active in music to within a few weeks of his death at 86 in 1945. Mrs. Kempf was still teaching private pupils at age 85, Miss Duff notes. Mrs. Kempf was 93 when she died in 1953.

Kempf house is a well-known example of Greek Revival style of architecture popular in the mid-19th century. It has four square piers in front and frieze windows with delicate iron grilles in a pressed-flower design.

Square piers were cheaper and easier than round for a carpenter to make, Stevens notes. Martha Washington House on West Huron Street has grilles of the same design, he adds, suggesting they may have been a stock item with local builders.

Following Mrs. Kempf's death, the house was sold to Earl V. Parker, a nearby neighbor. The city purchased it from his widow in 1969. Restoration work was supervised by Professor Ralph W. Hammett, A.I.A., a member of the city's Historic District Commission.

The house was opened to the public in October 1970. Visiting hours are 2 to 5 p.m., Saturdays and Sundays, with group tours by appointment.

Recently the city bought the land north of the house to Liberty Street and tore down the buildings to make way for a park beside the house.

"Old Reliable

The mule, of course, has many faults,
At him the chauffeurs frown;
But ne'er a Ford has to be hired
To haul him back to town."

From "Ford Smiles," All the Best Current Jokes About a Rattling Good Car," by Carleton B. Case, Shrewsbury Publishing Company, Chicago, 1917.

WCHS COLLECTION HAS ONE REVOLUTIONARY WAR MEMENTO, A MORTAR AND PESTLE USED BY 'PHYSICKER'

The Washtenaw County Historical Society has one certifiable Revolutionary War memento in its collections, according to Stuart Thayer, vice president and curator of the collections.

It is a mortar and pestle used by Ephraim Smith, a "physicker" in the Revolutionary army, who used it to pulverize dried herbs and the few drugs then known to medicine.

Smith, born in 1741, moved to Howell, Michigan, with his son, in 1839. He died three months later at age 99 and is buried in Oak Grove Cemetery there.

It was given to the society according to the wishes of a great-granddaughter, Mrs. Amelia (Mena) Botsford Sheley of Ann Arbor by her nieces, Ellen Botsford Bach and Fredericka Botsford Gillette. Ellen and Fredericka were aunt and great-aunt, respectively, of Doris Anna Bach of Kalamazoo who recently gave a number of other Botsford and Bach possessions to the Society.

MUSICAL KEMPFS TAUGHT MANY ANN ARBORITES BUT NOT THIS YOUNG LADY

While Reuben Kempf taught hundreds of Ann Arborites music (including St. Andrew's Episcopal choir boys for 33 years) there was one young lady here who refused to take lessons from him.

When her music teacher said that at 14 she was ready for more advanced training, her parents wanted to send her to Mr. Kempf. But she had heard an ugly rumor that if you missed a note, he would rap your fingers with a pencil, and she refused to go.

But after graduation from the School of Music here, she married his son, Paul, who had played a "mean" banjo in local dance orchestras during his college days before entering business. She, of course, is Edith Staebler Kempf, a past president of WCHS.

KEMPF'S RECALL CHRISTMAS 'GARDEN' UNDER THE TREE

What was Christmas like at the Kempf home when Paul Kempf was a boy?

Like other German families they had a "garden" under their Christmas tree. These could vary from simple to elaborate. He remembers going with his mother to the woods in the fall to collect moss and perhaps pretty rocks for it. The scene also included castles, mirror "lakes" and little wooden animals.

Baked goodies were also part of the holiday celebration. The Kempf's have a letter from University President Angell sent to Paul's mother thanking her for her delicious homemade Christmas bread.

COUNTY CALENDAR

CHELSEA HISTORICAL SOCIETY—Wystan Stevens, Ann Arbor historian, will speak on historic architecture in Ann Arbor and Chelsea at 8 p.m., Monday, February 14, at the Congregational Church.

The January meeting was canceled because of a snow storm and is to be rescheduled, probably in March.

DEXTER HISTORICAL SOCIETY—7:30 p.m., Thursday, January 27, at the Museum. Business meeting and a film on Americana from Greenfield Village are planned.

MILAN HISTORICAL SOCIETY —Meets third Wednesday of month at 7:30 p.m. at the Milan Community House.

SALEM HISTORICAL SOCIETY—Meets third Monday of month at 7:30 p.m. at Salem Township Hall.

SALINE HISTORICAL SOCIETY—Saline Attorney Don Shelton will talk about acquisition of historic properties by historical societies at 8 p.m., Tuesday, February 15, in the Blue Lounge at Saline High School.

YPSILANTI HISTORICAL SOCIETY—Gary Carpenter, a young local Civil War buff, will display his collection of Civil War mementos at the museum February 12 and 13. The museum is open to the public from 2 to 4 p.m. those days.

CHELSEA ELECTS OFFICERS; MRS. PETSCH IS PRESIDENT

Mrs. Frederick Petsch has been elected president of the Chelsea Area Historical Society for 1977.

Mrs. J. M. Feeny is vice president; Mrs. Max Hepburn, secretary; and Mrs. John Moore, treasurer. Elected to the board of directors were Dr. Wilfred Lane, Mrs. Feeny and Mrs. James Nicola.

MILAN CHOOSES OFFICERS

Milan Historical Society elected Police Chief Warren R. Hale president for 1977 and Arleigh Squires, vice president, at its December meeting.

Susan Bies will continue as secretary and Carole Smith as treasurer. Named to the board of directors were outgoing President Ken Baumann, Oliver Curry, Bill Smith, Mrs. Lorene Burger, and Mark Lathers. Lathers fills a new position added to the board to eliminate possible tie votes.

Chief Hale's history of Milan which came off the press in October is already half sold out, he reports.

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Washtenaw
Historical Society
Meeting
THURSDAY
8:00 P.M.
LIBERTY HALL
ANN ARBOR FEDERAL SAVINGS
LIBERTY AT DIVISION
JAN. 27, 1977

Miss Eileen Harrison
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Ypsilanti, Mi. 48197